

BALANCE SHEET ON BANDUNG

Is Neutralism the Key to Peace in the Orient?

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IT WAS inevitable that sooner or later an attempt would be made to bring together the various nationalist movements of Asia and Africa on a broad continental basis to balance the regional associations of Europe and the Americas. All the peoples of Asia and Africa have in common, either in the present or in the experience of the recent past, some degree of subjection to, or dependence on, Western powers that represented the decisive material superiority of Occidental civilization during the 18th and 19th centuries. Thus in spite of their great diversity of cultural traditions and certain sharp conflicts among themselves, they are linked together by a substantial community of sentiment and outlook which may be summed up under the head of anti-colonialism. A number of countries or areas, now mostly in Africa, remain under some form of colonial rule; others, including India and Indonesia, have only emerged from it within the last decade; still others, such as Turkey, Iran, and China, which never lost their formal independence, have memories of recent weakness and humiliation in their dealings with the West; finally, even Japan, the first Eastern nation to adapt itself successfully to the conditions of the modern world, was thrown back into a quasi-colonial status

As THE Bandung Conference developed, it provided substantial grounds for questioning whether neutralism in the Orient any more than in Europe can offer a basis for stabilizing the international situation. G. F. HUDSON suggests in what directions such stabilization may ultimately be found. A regular contributor to COMMENTARY on Far Eastern and international affairs, Mr. Hudson is a renowned authority on Asia, and presently director of the Far Eastern Studies center at St. Anthony's college in Oxford.

as a result of defeat in the Pacific war and has had to endure several years of control by a Western power over the whole of its national life.

The idea of assembling representatives of all these peoples as a new bloc in world affairs was bound to arise in the period of emancipation from Western tutelage, even if there had been no additional stimulus to such a move from the international Communist policy of ranging colonial and semi-colonial peoples against the West. As it is, the Communist factor has complicated the problems set by the contemporary process of national emancipation in Asia and Africa without fundamentally altering its nature.

Left to themselves, the movements of national independence and self-development in Asian and African countries would not tend to consider themselves as parts of a world revolution aimed at the transformation of the West as well as the East; while feeling a sense of solidarity with similar movements elsewhere, they would each be content with the attainment of effective political and economic independence, and, with the fulfillment of these aspirations, would see no obstacle to the most friendly relations with Western powers. The Marxist-Leninist interest in such movements, on the other hand, is concentrated on the antagonism they produce; they are regarded as allies in the permanent struggle against the West and their value is lost if they achieve their ends and are subsequently reconciled with the "imperialist camp." The greatest danger from the Communist point of view lies in a relaxation of tension between the Western world and colonial or semi-colonial countries, in transitions to independence effected without violence, and in readjustments of investment and property rights through peaceful

negotiations leading to economic cooperation on a new basis.

Nothing could have been more embarrassing to the Communists than the smooth transfers of governing authority to Asian leaders by the United States in the Philippines, or by Britain in India, Pakistan, Ceylon, and Burma—transfers which according to Marxist-Leninist theory could not occur and which cheated the policy-makers in Moscow of revolutionary assets on which they felt they could rely. Fortunately for them, however, the violent conflicts in Indo-China, Indonesia, and Malaya since the end of the Pacific war have availed somewhat to restore confidence in the dogma of inevitable catastrophe in colonial countries and provided suitable opportunities for Soviet diplomacy and propaganda, while China's alienation from the West, in spite of the Western alliances during the Pacific war and final liquidation of the "unequal treaties," has more than compensated in Communist eyes for the abatements of anti-Western tensions in the Indian sub-continent and the Middle East. The visionary expectation of colonial masses in militant revolt against unyielding imperialist oppression everywhere from Manila to Marrakesh has been largely disappointed, but a powerful Communist base has been established in the Far East and the aim of Communist policy henceforth must be to group Asian and African countries in an anti-colonial bloc with the Chinese People's Republic and weaken whatever ties they have with Western powers.

MORE than five years ago the outline of a regional grouping of Eastern peoples under joint Russo-Chinese leadership was drawn in the institution of the Conference of Asian and Australasian Trade Unions as a subdivision of the Communist-controlled World Federation of Trade Unions. The membership of this conference, which was held in Peking, included the Soviet Union to the north and Australia and New Zealand to the south, but did not extend west of Iran; the permanent bureau which was then set up was composed of representatives of the

Soviet, Chinese, Indian, and Australian WFTU branches.

The implied regional conception was thus one inclusive of the Soviet Union as an Asian power, and also of the two British dominions of the Pacific to the southeast of Asia, but exclusive of most of the Islamic world and not touching Africa. It is interesting to compare this range with that of the Bandung Conference, which excluded both the Soviet Union and the Australasian countries, but took in Turkey, the Arab countries, and Africa. The contrast is highly significant, even making full allowance for the fact that all the national units of the WFTU were politically homogeneous, whether they belonged to countries under Communist governments or not, whereas the Bandung Conference assembled representatives of governments of diverse political shades from Communist to anti-Communist. In particular, the absence of the Soviet Union, or at least of its constituent Central Asian republics, from Bandung, in spite of their reasonable claim to be regarded as Asian states, was a striking feature of a gathering that was supposed to represent the peoples of Asia. Australia is not Asia, nor is there any part of Asia outside the Soviet Union where modern European settlers form a majority of the local population; but the population of Siberia is preponderantly Russian, and even if it is to be regarded as non-Asian because of European origin, the Uzbeks, Turkmen, Tadzhiks, and Kazakhs have a long history as indigenous Asian peoples.

The significance to be attached to their exclusion depends on whether the Bandung Conference is regarded as the outcome of an initiative taken entirely outside the Communist bloc or whether it is seen as a project in which Communist influence was concerned from the outset. If the former view is taken, then the exclusion of the country which occupies nearly half the territory of the Asian continent was indeed a rebuff; if the latter, then we must infer a prior Russian willingness to stand aside and let China play the hand in an assembly which was intended to swing Asian and African peoples

away from a Western alignment. The weight of the evidence is in favor of the second interpretation.

The original promoter of the Bandung Conference was the government of Indonesia—a government politically dependent on Communist support in domestic politics and including ministers with close Communist connections. The Indonesian government had strong motives indeed for launching such a project quite apart from any Communist influence; as host in Java to such a gathering of nations it might expect to enhance its prestige both at home and abroad, and it might also hope to mobilize international support in its unresolved quarrel with the Dutch over western New Guinea. But it is extremely unlikely in the circumstances of its political situation that the Indonesian government would have made such an important move in foreign policy without the knowledge and consent of its Communist supporters, and the attitude of the latter would undoubtedly have been determined, not so much by local Indonesian considerations as by the wishes of Moscow and Peking. It was clearly from the beginning the Indonesian intention that Communist China should take part in the conference, and Chou En-lai's willingness to attend seems to have been ascertained at an early stage. The Soviet Union's willingness to be left out was also presumably ascertained at the same time—at any rate there have never been any signs of offense being taken in Moscow at exclusion from the conference.

THERE was no real prospect of making a success of the conference unless Indonesia could persuade India to take up the project and get it sponsored by all the five "Colombo Powers." For some time reports indicated that India's support for it was not more than lukewarm; whether Mr. Nehru doubted the wisdom of holding such a conference, or whether he disliked the idea of following a lead from Jakarta, he tended at first to pour cold water on the whole scheme. But he appears finally to have made up his mind that India had to go into it in a big

way and hold the center of the stage. It provided him with a good opportunity to preach the neutralist gospel in a sympathetic atmosphere and to reassert the Indian moral leadership which had been so seriously undermined by Pakistan's acceptance of American military aid, by the conclusion of the Manila treaty, and by the Turkey-Iraq pact. In the outcome, Nehru's righteous indignation against (Western) colonialism and against (Western-supported) collective security dominated the conference, and Chou En-lai was able to leave the good work to his non-Communist fellow Asian without any fear that India's verbal lightning might strike the Iron Curtain as well.

Pakistan might have proved more of an obstacle; as a member of SEATO and still separated from India by bitter unresolved conflicts, it might have refused to have anything to do with an Indonesian-Indian initiative for a conference to be held in Java and to include Communist China, nor could it be taken for granted that the countries of the Middle East would be attracted by the idea of a conference which might embroil them in the affairs of Southeast Asia without any tangible advantage to themselves. It was therefore necessary for the promoters to hold out inducements to the Moslem states in order to insure their attendance. Some hard bargaining with Pakistan and Egypt appears to have taken place. The first condition of Arab and Islamic participation was that Israel should be excluded. This was a flagrant violation of the principle that the basis of the conference was to be purely geographical, without ideological or political selection, but Nehru seems to have had little difficulty in taking sides, for the sake of a log-rolling diplomatic deal, against a small Asian country against which India had no conceivable grievance. Further, the Moslem states were able to insist that a hostile reference to Israel should be included in the resolutions of the conference and that specific demands relating to French North Africa and to the British Aden protectorate should be attached to the general denunciation of colonialism. Indonesia in return received

support for its claim to western New Guinea.

The conference thus hit out at Britain, France, and Holland as colonial powers and at Israel; there was no direct attack on the United States, but the wording of the resolution on atomic and thermonuclear weapons was by implication adverse to the American position in this matter. On the question of collective security in Asia, the nations involved in defense pacts or military-aid agreements on the anti-Communist side—namely Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan, Thailand, and the Philippines—stood firm in the face of the Nehruite rebukes, and in the end a compromise resolution was adopted which recognized "the right of each nation to defend itself singly or collectively in conformity with the charter of the United Nations," but required "abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defense to serve the particular interests of any of the great powers." This qualification was aimed specially at the endeavors of American diplomacy to obtain support in Asia for American policy towards Communist China.

IN CONTRAST to the open or implicit denunciations of the principal Western powers which the conference was persuaded to endorse, there was nothing in its resolutions which could cause the slightest annoyance or embarrassment in Moscow or Peking. There was no hint that the colonial domination condemned in North Africa, Arabia, and New Guinea might also be found in Soviet Central Asia or the Caucasus, nor any suggestion that the principle of "abstention from intervention or interference in the internal affairs of another country" was not being fully observed by the Communist powers. The Indian prime minister, in his attacks on collective security pacts designed for the containment of Communism, declined to recognize the Soviet-Chinese military alliance as falling within the category of international agreements endangering the peace of Asia.

It was left to Sir John Kotelawala, the prime minister of Ceylon, to speak out in defiance of the Nehruite ban on mentioning

the unmentionable: he boldly alluded to Communist intrigue and subversion in his own country and the need to link the anti-colonial formula with a condemnation of conquest through fifth columns. A substantial minority of the delegates welcomed his initiative and an attempt was made to get some reference to Communist imperialism included in the resolution on colonialism, but the neutralist majority in the end succeeded in keeping it out of the record.

Observers of the Bandung Conference were all agreed that Chou En-lai scored a great personal success there. He came undoubtedly with the intention of disarming all hostility by a display of moderation and benevolence. Chou the ruthless Communist—and his record shows just how ruthless he can be—was nowhere to be seen; there was only Chou the diplomat, bland, tolerant, and serene. "He came, he smiled, he conquered," reported one newspaperman covering the conference; indeed, he could afford to smile, for thanks to Indian leadership everything was going so well that there was no need for China's representatives to exert themselves at all. It was not Chou but Nehru who exhibited anger at Kotelawala's indiscretion; it was not Chou but Nehru who lashed Asian governments guilty of joining international combinations for containing Communism. Chou himself was all sweetness and light; he had no hard words for anyone, and his generous offer to negotiate with the United States about Formosa was brought out just at the right moment to achieve the maximum effect. He gently derided Southeast Asian fears of Chinese aggression; he invited the delegates of Thailand and the Philippines to come to China and see how peaceful everything was. In an atmosphere supercharged with emotions of Afro-Asian solidarity and latent suspicions of a return of Western imperialism, Chou En-lai won all hearts by his smooth identification of China with the common cause. The measure of his success was the publication in the Cairo press of pictures of Chou, Nehru, and Nasser as "the three champions of Afro-Asian independence."

IT is not, however, quite so simple as all that, even between China and India. Although Nehru's fixed idea that Asian countries must not have military alliances with Western powers leads him to oppose the collective security schemes of NATO and SEATO and thus in effect to play the Communist game in Asia, he is by no means indifferent to the national interests of India or willing to see China absorb the whole of Southeast Asia from the Gulf of Tongking to the Bay of Bengal. He apparently holds that Vietnam properly belongs to a Chinese sphere of influence, but that everything to the west of it should be regarded as within an Indian sphere. He is credited with the idea of creating a "neutral zone" composed of Burma, Laos, and Cambodia separating Communist China and Vietnam from Thailand, which is a SEATO country. This notion bears a strong family likeness to the neutral zone of Germany, Austria, and Yugoslavia which Soviet diplomacy is trying presently to create in Europe, and indeed Tito's recent visit to India may have had something to do with the simultaneous blossoming of neutralist thought in West and East.

India is in a position, as long as the situation is one simply of politics and diplomacy, to play a considerable part in Southeast Asian affairs because of her chairmanship and casting vote on the neutral commission set up by the Geneva Conference last year—the other two members being Canada and Poland. There has been a marked difference between the Indian attitude on the commission towards the affairs of Vietnam and Laos respectively. In Vietnam the Indians have been leaning over backward in ignoring or minimizing Vietminh violations of the armistice agreement, particularly with regard to the movement of refugees from the Communist zone; in Laos, on the other hand, India has sided with Canada against Poland in ruling that the Communist-controlled Pathet Lao forces must allow the stationing of Laos government troops in the two provinces which the Pathet Lao held at the time of the Geneva agreement. Nehru has thus strengthened the position of the Laos govern-

ment, which now looks to Delhi for protection. Reports from Bandung during the conference suggested that Nehru and Chou had reached an understanding for a division of Indo-China into Indian and Chinese zones of influence; the Vietminh to get the whole of Vietnam but to keep their hands off Cambodia and Laos.

If such an arrangement could be regarded as stable, the Western powers could hardly object to it—except insofar as the Indian attitude towards the Vietminh makes nonsense of the freedom of choice supposed to be assured to the Vietnamese by the Geneva agreement. But the writing off of Vietnam provides no guarantee that in return Cambodia and Laos would long remain immune from Vietminh-Chinese penetration, and if these countries were threatened with violent subversion, what power would India have in a crisis to protect them? It pays Chou En-lai and the Vietminh for the present—that is to say, until they have made sure of South Vietnam—to play up to Nehru's policy and encourage his dream of a neutral zone.

But if ever a real strain were to be imposed on such a structure, unsustained by any adequate backing of strategic power, it would collapse like a house of cards. Whatever real security exists in Southeast Asia today, with the vast new power of Communist China looming up to the north, is provided by SEATO and the major forces which it makes ultimately available in the event of an attack on Thailand. It is possible that Nehru is to some extent aware of this fact, and that he is ready to use SEATO as a factor of regional stability to strengthen his hand in dealing with China, even while he continues to denounce it. For in Asia, as in Europe, the neutrals are able up to a certain point to have it both ways. With a collective security organization behind them, they can profit from a system whose obligations they repudiate, and if in spite of their neutrality they get into trouble sometime with an aggressive power, the organization will always be there in reserve to give help.

There is, nevertheless, a danger that if too

many nations yield to the attractions of neutralism there may no longer be enough nations left who are willing to assume the risks and burdens that enable the neutralists to be neutral in safety. Nor can collective security be turned on like a tap whenever neutrals find that their neutrality has not been as invulnerable as they had hoped. Above all, neutralism is playing with fire because the disintegration of a potential defensive league into strategically isolated units with no assurance of external aid offers temptation to the aggressively inclined and in the long run increases the risk of adventures leading to general war.

THE West has to face the fact that, because of the persistence of habits of mind which identify the Western powers with imperialism, the prevailing mood of politically conscious opinion in Asia and Africa is strongly prejudiced against Western-organized collective security and inclined to give the benefit of every doubt to the Communist

side, particularly to China. There is no easy remedy for this state of affairs. Certainly no purpose is served by indulging in recriminations; only by the greatest patience and forbearance will it be possible for Western policies to win the confidence of an Eastern generation still possessed by the momentum of anti-Western nationalism.

Consolation may be found, however, in the fact that nearly all the governments and ruling groups which are now so anxious not to do anything which might offend the new China are basically opposed to Communism, and are in the last resort capable of learning by experience if and when the armed revolution is again on the march. The West cannot force its help on the East in advance, but must be ready to give it without reproaches when it is asked. Meanwhile there should be no wavering or hesitation in support of the alliances that already exist, for they alone provide the foundations on which defensive strength could be built in a time of trouble.